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**4 MEXICAN CARTEL OPERATIVES PLEAD GUILTY IN FEDERAL COURT  
TO MULTI-TON COCAINE IMPORTATION AND FIREARMS OFFENSES**

JAMES B. COMEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that four members of a Mexico-based drug cartel, JORGE MANUEL TORRES TEYER, VICTOR MANUEL ADAN CARRASCO, OSCAR MORENO AGUIRRE and LISTON McCORD, pled guilty late yesterday in Manhattan federal court to charges including narcotics importation conspiracy and using firearms in furtherance of drug trafficking crimes.

TORRES TEYER, CARRASCO and MORENO AGUIRRE were arrested in Belize during Hurricane Iris in October 2001. The defendants were in possession of more than one and one-half tons of cocaine destined for Mexico, and ultimately the United States. They are charged with having worked for a powerful Mexico-based cocaine cartel headed by drug kingpins Alcides Ramon Magana, a/k/a "El Metro," and Jesus Albino Quintero Meraz, a/k/a "Don Beto." The cartel is charged with importing hundreds of tons of cocaine into the United States between 1994 and 2002. Ramon Magana and

Quintero Meraz were arrested in Mexico in 2001 and 2002, respectively, and are in custody there pending proceedings to extradite them to the United States. They are also facing charges in Mexico.

TORRES TEYER pled guilty on May 27, 2003, to charges of conspiracy to import and distribute cocaine, and firearms possession. On June 9, 2003, the date scheduled for their trial, CARRASCO and MORENO AGUIRRE pled guilty to charges of conspiracy to import and distribute cocaine. MORENO AGUIRRE also pled guilty to a related firearms count. During the plea proceeding, CARRASCO asserted that his true name was "Jesus Elmer Cabarrubias," but that he had used the name VICTOR MANUEL ADAN CARRASCO while in Belize.

LISTON McCORD, the fourth defendant, was a Belizean government official who provided logistical support to the cartel, and assisted in the transportation of ton-quantities of cocaine through Belize to Mexico, en route to the United States. McCord entered his plea of guilty to narcotics importation charges on May 23, 2003.

The cartel's operations in Belize involved transfers, at pre-arranged coordinates on the high seas, between vessels under the cartel's control and cocaine-laden vessels from Colombia. After the exchange, the cartel's vessels proceeded to Belize and to Calderitas, in the state of Quintana Roo, Mexico,

where the cocaine was received and then transported by land to the United States.

All four defendants face maximum sentences of life imprisonment, and mandatory minimum sentences of 10 years' imprisonment, on the narcotics charges. TORRES TEYER and MORENO AGUIRRE, who also pled guilty to firearms charges, face additional mandatory minimum sentences of 5 years' imprisonment, which must be served consecutively with the sentences on the narcotics charges.

The convictions are the result of a joint investigation involving the United States Attorney's Office, offices of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA") in New York, Miami, Phoenix, Mexico and Belize, the Belize Directorate of Public Prosecutions, the Belize Police Department, and the Mexican Attorney General's Office.

Mr. COMEY praised the outstanding investigative efforts of the DEA's New York Field Division and Belize Country Office, as well as the Belize Police Department. Mr. Comey also praised the assistance provided to the investigation and prosecution by Kirk Anderson, the Director of Public Prosecutions of Belize.

Assistant United States Attorneys RICHARD SULLIVAN and ANIRUDH BANSAL are in charge of the prosecution.

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